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ABSTRACT

The Families in Education Program sponsored by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction is dedicated to nurturing a family-community-school partnership and provides this packet for schools to use throughout the year to promote families and learning. The articles in the packet contain ideas for making family-community partnerships work in the schools. Articles address the following topics: (1) quick start questions to link learning at school and home; (2) practices to improve school-family partnerships; (3) ways to use American Education Week ideas year-round; (4) grassroots community involvement based on Oregon's ParentShare program; (5) the American Library Association's Teen Read Week; (6) youth service learning to build skills and promote democracy; (7) citizenship to unite schools, families, students, and communities; (8) family involvement in early childhood programs; (9) tips for parents to notice and nurture their child's special talents; (10) Wisconsin's Sesquicentennial Home-School project; (11) a parenting survival kit; and (12) ways to enrich a museum visit. The final article discusses a parent brochure developed by an elementary school and the publication's impact on the school community. (LBT)

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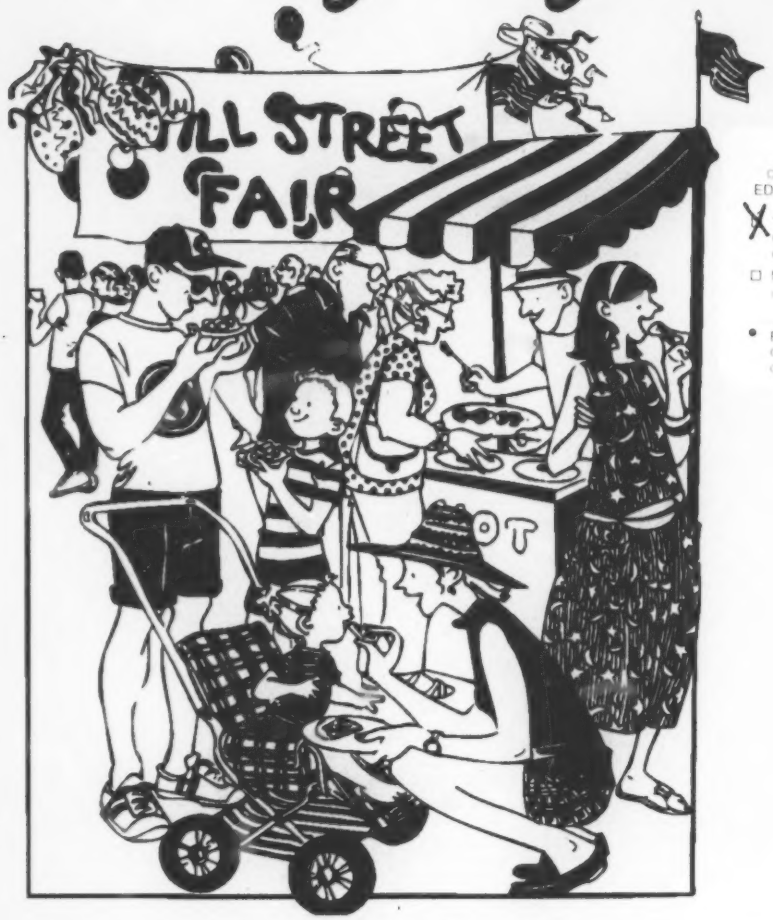

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Learning Together
Fall 1998

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Madison, Wisconsin

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Foreword

Some time during the hectic pace of the start of the school year, I encourage you—as parents, teachers, school administrators, and members of a community—to devote a few moments of reflection to the topic of families and learning. How are parents connected to what their children are learning? Do they feel welcome to volunteer at their child's school, or does it take an act of bravery to do so? The articles in this Learning Together packet contain many ideas for making family-community partnerships a way of operating for your school. Please take a few minutes to peruse them or pass them onto someone who can use them.

And, don't forget about that staple of lifelong learning: reading. The packet contains materials about the first-ever "Teen Read Week," an event to help young people and schools really celebrate the enjoyment that reading brings. Teen Read Week, sponsored by the American Library Association, runs from October 19 through 25. Put it on your calendar!

DPI is committed to nurturing family-community-school partnerships both through the publication of this booklet twice each year and through the efforts of the DPI Family-Community-School Partnership team. How can we help your school make 1998-99 a challenging, rewarding year of learning for children and their families? Give us a call to learn about the opportunities available to you. Call Jane Grinde, team director, at 608-266-9356 or Ruth Anne Landsverk at 608-266-9757. Both can also be reached via e-mail at the DPI Website, www.dpi.state.wi.us.

Thanks for all you to do promote learning together in Wisconsin! Have a wonderful school year!

John T. Benson
State Superintendent

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For Parents and School Staff:

Quick-Start Questions Linking Learning at School and Home

Looking for a way to get discussion going at your start-of-the-year committee meetings? Here's a quick tool to make sure your school has in place some key components to help inform families about their child's learning this year. Suggestion: as school starts, parents and staff members can meet together to fill out this chart, based on their perceptions. Compare and discuss results.

If there are wide differences in responses of parents and school staff, start by asking, "How can we make sure *everyone* knows about and can contribute to what children will learn this year? How can *everyone* get the information and help that they want?"

	Do families know it?	**Do families help make decisions about it?**	**Do families know who to contact and how to get help?**
What children will learn this year *(general concepts, by subject and grade)*			
How children's learning will be measured this year *(grades, state tests, etc.)*			
What school learning expectations are for homework, attendance, etc.			
How families can contribute to children's learning *(e.g. volunteer, attend school events, etc.)*			

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Principals' Top 10 Practices to Improve School-Family Partnerships

What are the best things a principal can do to cultivate a family-friendly school environment that enriches learning for all students and makes the school a place where families feel welcome and valued? Here's a "top ten" list of family-school partnership practices that principals say really works for them:

1. The Committee or Action Team—Convene a team of parents, teachers, community representatives, and the principal to develop and coordinate partnership plans and activities. Include PTA/PTO representatives and family members from all sectors of your school population. Start by assessing how your school presently reaches out to families, then survey parents and teachers to find out what areas *they* think the school needs to address. Give committee members responsibility for coordinating projects to create ownership in family-school partnerships and to ease the principal's burden.

2. Volunteering—Recruit parents, senior citizens, and other students to volunteer. Make it possible for everyone to volunteer in some way at school, home, or school events. Survey parents to find out their special hobbies or interests, then *act* upon the information contained in those surveys! Appoint a volunteer coordinator to survey school staff, and oversee the training and scheduling of volunteers. Don't forget to recognize volunteers' contributions.

3. Family Learning Opportunities—Family Math, Family Science, Family Tools and Technology, and other family learning programs are an excellent way to encourage parents, guardians, and children to learn together in planned, meaningful activities. Families work cooperatively, reasoning and thinking logically to solve problems. Facilitators can usually be obtained through CESAs or university staff. Get fathers on board by offering some opportunities tailored for them to learn with children.

4. Home-School Newsletters—Many schools send newsletters to parents informing them on a weekly or monthly basis about school events. Especially appreciated by families are articles containing specific tips about activities or practices parents can do to help children learn and grow. If your school uses a purchased camera-ready newsletter, be sure to supplement it with information about learning occurring in the child's classroom and school.

5. Resources for Families—whether it's a bookshelf in your school library, or a collection in your school's Family Center, schools can play a valuable role in helping parents understand how children develop and learn. Send home parenting materials that are easy-to-read, succinct, and published in all the languages students speak. Also, the school can really help put parents in touch with some of their best resources—each other. Be sure to call (1-800-USA-LEARN) or visit the website (www.ed.gov/pubs) of the U.S. Department of Education for lots of timely, family-friendly learning materials and ideas.

6. Welcoming New Students, Families—First impressions can be lasting, and schools are no exception. Programs to welcome new families who move to or graduate into your school can jump-start warm, positive relationships. Offer new families written information about the school and community, along with a friendly face to deliver and explain it. Some schools train parent volunteers to greet new families at home and at

school and answer questions about the school and community.

7. Home Learning Enablers—Many resources exist to encourage parents and students to learn together at home. Some resources, such as TIPS (Teachers Involving Parents), produced by the Center for Schools, Families, and Children's Learning at Johns Hopkins University, direct the student to ask parents questions or explain a lesson or an activity to parents. Other types of interactive homework ask parents to teach or relay some information to children that links to the classroom curriculum.

8. Friday Folders—A simple, ongoing way of relaying information to parents, Friday (or Monday, Wednesday, etc.) Folders contain a variety of information that lets parents know how and what their children are doing in school, for example, graded assignments, homework, and tests. Some schools also include a parent-teacher communication form that teachers and parents can fill out to ask questions or provide information, complete with a response section. Notices from the superintendent, principal, and PTA/PTO can also be included.

9. Learning Outcomes—Many principals have discovered the value of offering parents of children at each grade level general information about what their children will be learning that year. This information, which can be presented in very simple format on an 8.5 x 11-inch sheet of paper, often includes a "curriculum-at-a-glance" listing general concepts to be learned by subject area, the school's learning expectations (homework, attendance, etc.), major upcoming school events, and how the child's teacher can be reached. The information should be written clearly and concisely, avoiding any educational jargon and, of course, in all of the languages that students speak.

10. Wisconsin Network of Partnership Schools—Principals say joining this Network, affiliated with the National Network of Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University, puts them in touch with the latest research-based resources, grant opportunities, and practical tools to advance partnerships. All Wisconsin schools and districts are encouraged to send an "Action Team" to the annual DPI Family-Community-School Partnership Conference, usually held in summer, to share and learn about effective partnership practices from the experts—themselves!

Editor's Note: this list has been adapted and "Wisconsinized" from a document originally published by the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, P.O. Box 1239, Morristown, NJ 07962-1239, phone 973-540-8442. Also available on the Internet at http://eric-web.tc.columbia.edu/guides/tentips1.html.

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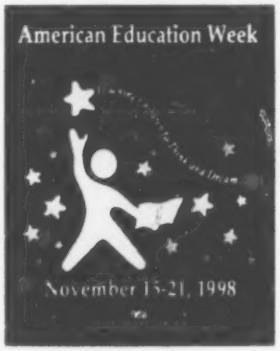
Teaching Children to Think and Dream. . . Use American Education Week Ideas Year-Round

American Education Week will be celebrated November 15-21 this year, but the following ideas and activities can be used any time of the year to recognize individual contributions, welcome families and community members into schools, and invite everyone to have a voice in shaping the decisions made about children's learning.

The 1998 American Education Week (AEW) theme, "Teaching Children to Think and Dream," is repeated from last year as a reminder that schools provide students with both skills and hope for the future, and that schools are places of learning, intelligence, and wonder. By working together, we can give students the tools they need to be whatever they want to be. Strengthen the bonds between your schools, families, and communities with these ideas:

- **Thanks.** Have students write a short thank-you note to someone—teacher, guidance counselor, support staff member, volunteer—anyone who works or has worked in a school and has helped them in the past.
- **Target Your Alumni.** Hold a reunion day, inviting alumni to return to school and talk with the students, visit with each other, and see what schools are like today. Use the occasion to launch an Alumni Hall of Fame, inviting nominations from the community, students, and parents, as well as alumni participants.
- **Spotlight District Initiatives.** More than 70 percent of communication is getting the attention of your audience. AEW helps you grab their attention, and it's a great time to demonstrate and "show off" some of your district or school goals for the year and how you are accomplishing them.
- **Celebrate Your History.** Launch a program to document your school history through interviews of alumni and senior citizens. Record these memories and moments with a video camera, and present those interviewed with copies of the finished product. Let everyone know what your school stands for.
- **Target the Media.** Invite members of the news media to talk with students about their work covering the issues of the day. Invite student editors to interview the media regarding freedom of the press and ethics in journalism. Hit the tough issues and use cable and/or TV programming where possible.
- **Celebrate Cultural Diversity.** Celebrate the cultural diversity in your community by bringing all groups together to share their rich heritage through music, food, and discussions. Build bridges of understanding with panels of various groups, sharing their concerns about racism.



- **Take a Survey.** Have a simple survey ready for visitors to fill out at American Education Week activities. Ask what information they are presently receiving about their schools. What could the schools do for them? What do they think the key problems are in education? What is right with education? How would they like to receive information? What programs would they like the school to offer? Remember to include a demographic question to identify those who respond, such as: Are you a parent of a student in our schools? Are you a parent of a student in a private or parochial school? Are you a senior citizen?, etc.
- **Hold an "Accountability Day."** Demonstrate that your students are learning the basics—reading, writing, and arithmetic. Then show them how your students are also learning critical thinking, problem solving, and other critical skills needed for future success.

• **Hold a Series of Parenting Meetings.** Plan a series of meetings throughout the week to address concerns of parents: grading, drugs and violence, how to ensure your child is ready for kindergarten, living with your teenager and surviving, simple and fun ways for parents to teach science at home, preparing for a career and/or college, etc. Hold these meetings at times and in places convenient for parents—local church, union meeting hall, community building—as well as in the schools.

• **Hold a Children's Summit.** Invite business and community leaders, parents and non-parents to address education reform, changes taking place in the schools, and steps needed to prepare students for the 21st century. Don't just talk, but seize the opportunity to "call for the sale." Invite participants to sign up to serve on special committees to implement suggestions made at the summit.

• **Hold a Parent Education Day.** Exhibit student art, offer booths for local service organizations to hand out information, and talk with parents about resources available to them. Have a "food fair" with samples of items prepared by the district food service department for their breakfast and lunch menus.

• **Take the School to the Community.** Hold demonstration classes in shopping malls or local office buildings. Don't limit your activities to art displays and musical programs. Consider showing classrooms in action, i.e., kindergarten students taking the first steps in reading readiness, primary students using computers, vocational students working on projects, and high school students debating national issues.

• **Teacher for a Day.** Invite your legislators and representatives, business leaders, and elected officials to sign up to teach for a day or a class period. Be sure you have a camera record these activities, and encourage media coverage. In fact, invite members of the media to also sign up to teach.

from the National School Public Relations Association, 15948 Derwood Road, Rockville, MD 20855, (301) 519-0496

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Oregon's ParentShare:

Spirit of Community Grows from the Grassroots

Imagine living in a community where you've never mailed a letter, shopped at the local grocery store, or filled a prescription at the local pharmacy. You do those things where you work—in another community. Then, you have a baby. Suddenly, you'd really like someone to talk to, share experiences with, and ask advice of, but you haven't even met your neighbors. Where do you turn?

If you live in Oregon, a small community about 10 miles south of Madison, you'd know where to turn. You'd have a community resource directory produced by ParentShare at your fingertips, a ParentShare Partner who had already visited you and your newborn at home whom you could call for reassurance, and you might have met your neighbors at a prenatal or parenting class sponsored by ParentShare.

"The intent of ParentShare is not to connect families with ParentShare, but to connect families with each other," Donna Mahr, the group's founder, maintains. "The ultimate success would be for there to be no ParentShare, but to have the spirit of ParentShare in everyone's hearts. It would be the community culture."

Oregon parents, new and experienced, can take advantage of a variety of parenting-related opportunities to learn, volunteer, and play, including:

- **ParentShare Partners**—trained volunteers who visit the homes of new parents to offer a friendly face and information about community resources;
- **ParentTalk**—focused sessions for parents to learn about and discuss topics related to child development;
- **The Learning Circle**—planned sessions for senior citizens and young children to learn and create things together;
- **A Day at Grandma's House**—parents, grandparents, and the children they care for are invited for snacks and socialization to the Mahr residence to get to know one another informally.

Mahr said she has found lots of grandparents caring for their grandchildren while parents work who need help reconnecting to child-oriented resources and people in the community.

ParentShare has also developed a community resource directory, offers parenting classes, prenatal classes, and help forming playgroups. The group is also creating a resource center at the public library for parents of birth to pre-schoolers, as well as a resource center in the elementary school that deals more with school-age child and parenting issues.

"All of these things have come from the grassroots—people stepping up and saying they have a need. Our response has always been to say, 'Yes.' Then we step back and say, 'OK, how are we going to do that?'"

Mahr said the group grew out of an idea planted at a meeting she and a friend, Peg Schmidt, attended in 1994 to secure funding for a parenting newsletter. The newsletter was funded, but Mahr and Schmidt decided that Oregon also needed more—a monthly conversation group for parents. "It was a great idea, but it didn't go. We couldn't get a critical mass of parents to get involved."

Mahr and Schmidt conducted research on the demographics of the Oregon community and discovered that the vast majority of couples who lived there did not play, eat, or work there. "It was basically a place for them to sleep until they had their first baby. Having that first baby is a major life event. Everything shifts, and ParentShare offers one level of support," she said.

ParentShare, governed by a 10-member development team of parent and community representatives, focuses on helping to create a sense of community in new parents of newborns to children ready to enter Kindergarten. Its services are universal because "everyone needs help," and it aims to:

- make information accessible so parents can make sound decisions and help their children grow,

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- put parents in touch with parents so they can support each other and be supported,
- connect community members with each other to provide children with a sense of security and a feeling of belonging, and
- help children feel valued.

The Oregon School District is a major supporter of ParentShare, providing office space and clerical assistance at the district-operated building that houses the community swimming pool. The Oregon Community Education Coordinator also works closely with ParentShare to make school facilities available for programs.

For example—Mahr gets excited when she talks about ParentShare's latest offering—an open gym session in an elementary school for preschoolers and parents has attracted several fathers who care for their children during the day. The fathers, who began by attending sessions with their own children, are gradually growing into teacher roles. "You should see those fathers!" Mahr exclaims. "They have everyone playing basketball and doing somersaults on the mats. It's one of those occasions when we're just in awe of the discovery of connecting a need with what fathers like to do."

ParentShare also works with school district AODA staff, a county Joining Forces for Families initiative, and the Dane County Family Living Agent to sponsor prevention-based activities for families. If you happen to pass by an elementary school this winter and, on a cold, bleak day, see families swimming, eating, working on computers, making music, and generally having fun together, it will be another ParentShare event connecting families, melding neighborhoods, and shaping a community.

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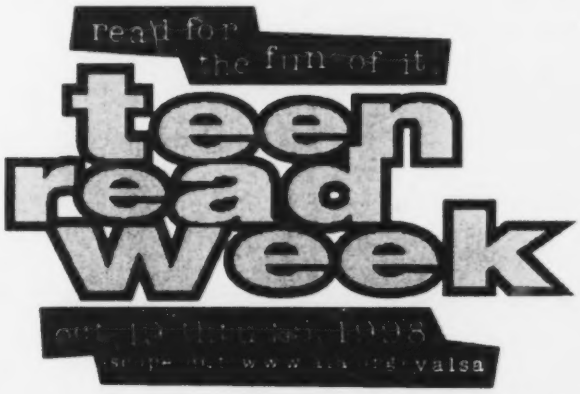
Schools, Libraries Invited to Join Effort Encouraging Teens to Read

It's an old story. The 4-year-old who begged for bedtime stories is now a 14-year-old more interested in computer games than opening a book. What started out as a magical adventure has turned into a chore.

To help change this scenario, the American Library Association's Young Adult Library Services Association and National Education Association are sponsoring the first national Teen Read Week, October 19–25, 1998. The goal: To turn teens on to reading. The message: "Read . . . for the fun of it."



Schools and public libraries are encouraged to sponsor activities and events during the week that emphasize how enjoyable reading can be for young people at a busy time of life when they may not take the time to read beyond required school textbooks. Following are some tips for teachers, parents, and students that encourage more teen reading.

Tips for Teachers

- Collaborate with school librarians to promote reading for fun in your school.
- Arrange for librarians to do book talks for classes on titles of interest to teens. These might include the new Alex Book Awards for the best adult books for teens.
- Keep a book you are reading for enjoyment close at hand and visible.
- Talk about your favorite books with students.
- Read aloud to your students.
- Read some of the books your students are reading.
- Recommend books to your students.
- Show your enthusiasm for books that are being assigned. Talk about what you like most or least about them and encourage students to make their own judgments.
- Make time in your classes every day for a shared reading experience.
- Talk to other teachers and parents about the importance of reading for fun.
- Ask the administration to consider a sustained, silent reading period for your school.

Tips for Parents

- Make reading a ritual in your home. When children outgrow bedtime stories, set aside a special reading time for the whole family, turn off the TV and make a bowl of popcorn.
- Ask everyone to share something they've read—a poem, newspaper article, or chapter of a book at Sunday brunch or other family meal gathering.
- Have older children read stories to younger children.
- Reward reading. If a teen finishes a book, offer to talk about it over pizza. Offer to buy another book.
- Have plenty of books to choose from around the house.
- Ask your public or school librarian for books to entice reluctant readers.
- Read the same books your teenager is reading and talk about them.
- Talk about the books you are reading and offer to share.

- Let your teen see you reading for fun as well as work.
- Keep books and reading materials in key locations, such as the car, bathroom, kitchen, family room, near the TV and computer.
- Make sure your teen has transportation to the library and bookstores.
- Visit the library or bookstore with your teenager.

Tips for Teens

- Keep a book going all the time. Carry it with you in your backpack.
- Keep a book of short stories by your bed, or try to read something for fun each night before you go to bed. It will help clear your mind.
- Talk about what you read with your friends. Suggest books they might like. Ask them for suggestions.
- If you liked the movie, read the book. Chances are you'll like it even better.
- If you have particular concerns or interests you'd like to read about, ask a librarian for recommendations. Librarians are there to help you—no questions asked.
- Remember, you don't have to finish a book. If you don't like it, stop reading and find one you do like. It's all right to skim parts of a book that don't interest you.
- Visit your local bookstores. Many offer a coffee bar or musical acts that make them fun places to read, listen, and learn.
- Don't hurry when reading for fun. Take time to enjoy.
- Keep a book with you to read when you don't have anything else to do.
- Read while you are half-watching TV.
- Read while you are waiting for the computer to boot-up.
- Read to your younger brother or sister.
- Remember, not everyone, including some adults, is lucky enough to be able to read easily and well. Volunteer to help tutor a child or another student with reading problems.

More suggestions, publicity materials, and camera-ready art are available on the ALA Web site at http://www.ala.org/teenread or by contacting the Young Adult Library Services Association, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611. Telephone: 1-800-545-2433, ext. 4390. E-mail: yalsa@ala.org.

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Youth Service Learning Builds Skills, Promotes Democracy

by Jeff Miller, DPI Coordinator for Service-Learning and Community Partnership

What is youth service learning?

One of the most successful models for experiential education and authentic learning in recent years is "service-learning." This teaching method involves the performance of community service, and the use of the service experience as a foundation for classroom teaching and learning. Teacher and students work together to identify issues of concern in their schools and communities, and to find ways to address these issues.

Service-learning projects can be limited in scope, such as cleaning up school grounds, or they can be very ambitious, such as:

- mounting a campaign to raise money to improve a local park.
- donating to an international human rights organization.
- making a presentation to younger students on drunk driving.
- organizing a community forum on race relations, drug abuse, pollution of a local waterway, or child abuse.

Though the focus is on improving the community and helping others, service-learning is more than volunteerism. It builds research, problem solving and communication skills, and it involves classroom reflection on the service experience through journal writing, small group discussion, reports, or even by writing articles for a school or local newspaper.

How does service learning promote partnerships?

Since the focus of service-learning is usually the community, partnerships between schools and community members and groups are a natural part of service-learning projects. Several Wisconsin service-learning projects have been very successful in bringing communities and schools together around service projects. For example, the Y.E.S. Team (Youth Eager to Serve) at Prairie Middle School in Prairie du Chien is a voluntary organization open to all sixth- through eighth-grade students. The 1997-98 team included 107 students. The Y.E.S. Team, which began in 1993, adopts monthly themes, with different projects for each grade level. During Friendship and Appreciation Month, for example, students created appreciation packets for new teachers.

Other projects have included providing drunk driving awareness to the community, visiting nursing homes and hospitals, teaching staff and other students about service-learning, collecting money for a food pantry, working at a heart and cancer telethon, audiotaping books for special needs students, visiting the elementary school to present an anti-smoking campaign, holding a seminar on aging, and tutoring other students.

As part of a continuing project begun in the 1994-95 school year, 6th and 7th-grade students at De Soto Middle School visited nursing homes, held a Sesquicentennial Folk Fair with 35 retired community members, and completed an "Old School" project in which they interviewed nursing home residents about their childhoods and created a book from the interviews. The students then returned to the nursing home to read the residents' stories to them, and gave each resident a copy of their completed book. All K-8 students in the district were invited to the folk fair. De Soto students also worked in a community garden at the elementary school and did presentations and led discussions on their projects.

Students at Alma High School are involved in a variety of service projects, most of which relate to local environmental issues. The economy of the city of Alma, located on the Mississippi River, depends on tourism, so students know that the natural beauty of their area must be carefully maintained. Projects in the 1987-88 school year included improving the Rieck's Park Wildlife Area and boardwalk, cleanup of the shoreline, and

improving the hiking trail that runs from the city to the Buena Vista Overlook. Students have also begun planning a nature study area for their school on 200 acres of land donated by Dairyland Power. Part of this process for these projects involved appearing before the Alma City Council and working with the city's Parks and Recreation Department to ensure the projects were in compliance with land use requirements. Other projects included painting the bath house, scraping and painting picnic tables and playground equipment at Buena Vista Park on Arbor Day, and continuing a multi-year "Adopted Grandparent" program with students from the junior high.

Lois Balk, the project coordinator at Alma H.S., believes that these projects are having an effect in the community that goes beyond the obvious improvements to the outdoor areas. Adults in the community are beginning to see young people in a more positive way, she said. Students are proud of what they have accomplished, and try to preserve the areas they have worked on, for example, by not riding their bicycles through it. Students are also learning about the variety of jobs in their community, and how to assess community needs and respond appropriately, she added.

Can service learning advance citizenship?

John Dewey, perhaps the most important philosopher and educational theorist of the twentieth century, viewed education as the foundation of American democracy. Dewey advocated "experiential education" to teach young people democratic habits, meaning that students should venture out of the classroom and into the world to learn about and attempt to solve real problems.

Dewey believed that what we now call "authentic learning" occurs when students are given the opportunity to get their hands dirty—to work together and with adults to accomplish something more than just passing a test. Authentic learning takes place when student and teacher work together to address questions for which neither has a ready answer. Rather than rote memorization of facts transferred from teacher to student, authentic learning allows students to discover knowledge through investigation, discussion, and reflection.

Service-learning brings the school out into the community and provides a way for the school to serve the community's needs. It also provides the opportunity for students to see what they learn in context, to see that there are reasons for what they are taught. And instead of learning just enough to pass a test, students engage in projects that require them to seek out help from teachers, other adults and peers, and to acquire relevant knowledge in order to solve a problem. In this way, students learn to identify problems, to discuss possible solutions with other members of the community, to build consensus, and to work with others to implement those solutions. They learn the skills required for life in a democratic community.

Strengthening Families through Service-Learning

Involving parents and other family members in service-learning projects can result in positive results for the school, the students, and the family. Because students often become less involved in family activities when they reach adolescence, service-learning projects that involve adult family members can provide an opportunity for togetherness that otherwise might not occur. Mini-grants are also available to districts and schools for Adult Volunteer projects to support school-community partnerships and student achievement.

Just as students need to be part of the planning for service projects, so should parents be included in planning activities. And, just as students learn from reflection on service, parents and other adults can benefit from the opportunity for

reflection on their experience. The self-esteem of parents and students alike will improve when they work together to improve their schools and communities.

Parents' initial resistance or lack of enthusiasm will decrease as they and their children find working together on service projects not only rewarding but also helpful in strengthening family bonds. Adult family members should be given options for participating in Youth Service-Learning or Adult Volunteer projects without being made to feel guilty if they are unable to participate for work or other reasons. The opportunity should be offered for meaningful participation to *all* parents. Too often, a small group of parents are consistently active in their children's schooling, while others feel unwanted in the school, or may not know how to become involved. The goal should be to reach all parents, and to help them understand that no matter their income level, educational background, language or race, they can contribute to their children's learning.

What funding opportunities are available from DPI?

All Wisconsin schools, public and private, are eligible to receive Youth Service-Learning and Adult Volunteer mini-grants to undertake service-learning projects. Grants are also available to help community-based organizations initiate service-learning projects with schools. All grants are administered by Wisconsin's 12 Cooperative Educational Service Agencies (CESAs). The entire program is financed through the Learn and Serve America program of the Corporation for National Service.

The DPI and the CESAs sponsor regional service-learning trainings for teachers and members of community-based organizations in the fall of each year. For information on the service-learning mini-grant process or on service-learning in general, please feel free to contact your CESA Youth Service-Learning contact listed below, or call Jeff Miller, Service-Learning and Community Partnership Coordinator at DPI at 1-800-441-4563 or 608-261-7494. Your school can tell you which CESA to call.

CESA Youth Service-Learning Coordinators

CESA 1: Sharon Wisniewski, (414) 546-3000
CESA 2: Carole Klopp, (608) 232-2861
CESA 3: Gary Baxter, (608) 822-3276
CESA 4: Judy Aakre, (608) 785-9373
CESA 5: Joyce Unke, (608) 742-8811
CESA 6: Jackie Schoening, (920) 236-0531
CESA 7: Jim Kampa, (920) 492-5960
CESA 8: John Knickerbocker, (920) 855-2114
CESA 9: Fred Skebba, (715) 453-2141
CESA 10: Mary Lorberter, (715) 720-2036
CESA 11: Cindy Becker, (715) 986-2020
CESA 12: Jim Lee, (715) 682-2363

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Building Better Citizens:

Uniting Schools, Families, Students, and Communities

More than one-third of the 1,325 high school students responding to the 1997 Wisconsin Youth Risk Behavior Survey reported riding at least once in the past 30 days with a driver who had been drinking. About 16 percent said they, themselves, had driven a car after drinking.

Nearly one-quarter of all students reported seriously considering suicide in the past 12 months, and one-fifth reported attempting suicide in the same time period.

Four in 10 students reported having sexual intercourse. Nearly half of students who had sex said they were 15 or 16 at the time.

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction encouraged the 43 public high schools participating in this survey—and all who read the Youth Risk Survey Report—to keep one question in mind: "How can we use this information to help improve the health and safety of Wisconsin students?"

To help address that question, State Superintendent John Benson announced the creation of the Wisconsin Citizenship Initiative, an effort to provide leadership to schools and communities to promote core values they identify as vital for the survival of a strong democracy. Such values could include courage, honesty, respect, civic responsibility, and individual responsibility.

Seven Characteristics of Successful Schools

The DPI recently published *Citizenship: Building a World of Good* as a tool kit to help schools explore assets, associations, and actions they can take to ensure their environments are healthy and safe for students. Seven characteristics, in particular, stand out as common in schools that are successful in developing caring, contributing, productive, and responsible citizens. These schools have:

Core Values: School and community members alike can identify citizenship qualities, such as honesty and responsibility, that all agree to foster in children. These qualities are modeled by staff and students alike and set the standard for acceptable behavior.

Safe and Orderly Places: Students and staff feel respected, and the climate and culture of the school is drug-free and safe from any form of violence. Children and adults learn constructive ways to settle differences, and peaceful conflict resolution is the norm.

Family and Community Partnerships: The contributions of all who make up the school community are honored and celebrated. Parents, caregivers, and community members have a variety of opportunities to make meaningful contributions to school programs and student citizenship development.

Address Societal Issues: Prevention of risk behaviors, such as violence, alcohol, and other drug abuse, AIDS/HIV, and teen pregnancy, are a valued part of the school's programs. Services are

available to students and staff who may be facing such issues in their own lives.

Positive Relationships: Students feel personally known and cared for by at least one adult in the school. Students and community members are viewed as resources for supporting one another.

Engage Students' Minds: Schools use many strategies and approaches to make learning relevant for students. Classrooms are interactive places that often take learning beyond the schoolhouse door.

High Expectations: Students are expected to do their best and experience success. All students and staff are expected to model positive behaviors that embody good citizenship.

CITIZENSHIP Building a World of Good

Citizenship Building Blocks

How can schools "build a world of good" and cultivate the seven characteristics of successful schools for citizenship? Following is an overview of a simple seven-step process to help make citizenship part of your school's culture. Each step is explained in more detail in the actual Toolkit.

Link with existing school improvement efforts. Planning to help children become caring, contributing, productive, and responsible people should be part of a single school improvement plan. Rather than duplicate existing planning processes, consider adding citizenship to your current school improvement goals. These programs can be excellent vehicles for citizenship:

- Goals 2000
- Wisconsin's Model Academic Standards
- Improving America's Schools Act (IASA)
- Site-based management/decisionmaking
- Strategic planning
- Lifework education
- Wisconsin Partnership Schools Network

Make a commitment. Adopt a resolution. Publicly proclaim your citizenship goals by creating your own school resolution. Be sure to involve staff, parents, community members, and students in developing this document. It will help key constituents think similarly about citizenship goals and purposes, and becomes a first step in establishing a vision for what the school and community hope to achieve through their collective effort.

Assemble a citizenship team. All good ideas need a group of committed people willing to provide time and leadership for ideas to become reality. Include on your team representatives of the teaching staff, support staff, administration, families—including those with working parents, single parents, and those who may not normally be involved—community members, enough active members to make progress, and a leader to coordinate the team's work and communicate its goals to others. Consider:

- Invite a small group of opinion leaders to meet with your team to explain the timelines, goals, and possible outcomes of your team.
- Establish a timeline and give a definite beginning and end to the team's work.
- Gain the consensus of all team members for meeting times, places, length of meetings, and agenda items. Then stick to them!
- Meet at different times and locations so all members can attend.
- Integrate new members if others must leave.

Plan for success. Focus on small changes. Allow the team to plot some "baby steps" to provide for public input, definite progress, celebrate present successes, and plan future action. Begin with a self-assessment of your school's strengths and weaknesses, how family and community members are involved, and how all students can connect with the citizenship initiative.

Foster citizenship in multiple ways. Schools offer many activities and programs that promote the development of citizenship. Here are some examples of programs your school might connect with:

- youth service learning
- peer mediation
- mentor programs
- character education
- vocational student organizations
- parent-teacher organizations

Continually inform your community. Schools have a responsibility to inform the public about their initiatives and success stories. Many media are required to offer public service time or space to promote publicly-supported endeavors such as education. Consider all newspapers, radio, and television media in your area, as well as your school building or district newsletters to get the word out about citizenship. Create a network of thoughtful "key communicators" to react to your team's draft proposals, focus on the positive aspects of the citizenship effort, address current issues before they escalate, and help plan for future issues.

Evaluate your results. Take time to survey team members, students, staff, and family and community members at large about how things have changed as a result of the citizenship focus, how they rate the progress of the team, and issues they would like to see addressed as the work continues.

Note: All Wisconsin public schools received copies of the 1997 Wisconsin Youth Risk Behavior Survey Report and the Citizenship Toolkit. To obtain additional copies, please contact your CESA or the DPI Student Services, Prevention & Wellness Team, 125 S. Webster St., P.O. Box 7841, Madison, WI 53707-7841 or call (608) 266-8960.

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Family Involvement in Early Childhood Programs:

Choosing the Right Program for Your Child

There are many kinds of early childhood programs for young children ages 0-5. Some programs are home-based, while others are in more formal settings, such as centers and schools. They include Head Start and preschool programs, both public and private. Regardless of the location, the extent of your family's involvement in your children's early childhood program makes a big difference in how well children adjust and how much they learn. When families take part in their young children's education programs, children do better in school, and the quality of their education can improve.

What is family involvement, and how can families choose early childhood programs that encourage it? This article looks at these questions, and provides information on how to choose an early childhood program that encourages family involvement.

What is Family Involvement?

Family involvement means that families work together with caregivers and teachers to create an atmosphere that strengthens learning, both at the program and in the home. It includes the many ways that family members can influence children's education. For example:

- *You can be a customer* because early childhood education is a service for families. Like other customers, you can tell programs what you like and don't like about the program, and offer ideas about how to make it better.
- *You can be a supporter* of the program by giving materials (snacks, classroom supplies) to the program. You can sell things (baked goods, t-shirts) to raise money, and ask for donations from local businesses who want to support the program. You can find new families by advertising in local newspapers, and places where families go during the day.
- *You can be a volunteer.* You can work at your child's program and help teachers in the classroom or at snack time or lunch. Sometimes helping at school lets you go to teacher training workshops on issues like health and safety. Sometimes it means taking part in classroom activities like reading to your children.
- *You can be an advocate for the program* by talking to school board members and local politicians about the benefits of the program and the need for continued funding. It is your job to let the community know the importance of the early childhood program.
- *You can be on the parent-teacher association (PTA) or on a parent advisory board* that helps plan the program, hire staff, and raise money. This job lets you have a direct say in how the program affects your family.
- *You can be a learner.* Research shows that parents' child-rearing practices and beliefs are related to the child's performance in school. A good early childhood program can help you learn about your own children's development and what you can do to best support their learning and social skills. They can offer you ideas about how to help your children learn at home. They can provide information about what aspects of the home, what parents do, and what their attitudes are that are most important to children's early school success.
- *You are the best resource for information about your child.* Each child is special, and you can help the program adapt to your child's individual differences. If your child has a disability, this is particularly important.

How to Choose a Program that Promotes Family Involvement.

If you are looking for an early childhood program that encourages family involvement, you need to do two things. First, tell the program's director that you and your family want to be involved in your child's education while in the program. Second, ask what opportunities are available for family involvement in the program. Below are some questions that you can ask when looking for a program that encourages family involvement.

How does the program show that family involvement is a good idea? All family members, including parents, brothers, sisters, and

grandparents, should feel welcome in the program. Are program activities open to my whole family? Do program staff seem willing to listen to my ideas? Do the written materials from the program talk about family involvement?

How does the program respond to each family's needs? Every family faces its own set of challenges, and programs should understand the individual strengths and needs of each family. Are meetings scheduled after work so that I can come? If meetings are at night, is child care provided? Do teachers speak any languages other than English? Will my child's teacher visit our home to get to know the family better? Are my family's holidays celebrated at my child's early childhood program?

How does the program let families know what happens during the day? Communication between home and the program is an important part of family involvement. Program and home activities should complement each other. Families need to know what children are doing in their programs. They may wish to reinforce some of these activities at home. Teachers or caregivers need to know what children are doing at home so that program activities can take advantage of these learning opportunities. Are there regularly scheduled parent-teacher conferences? Do teachers have "call-in" hours? Is there time to speak with teachers when I drop off or pick up my child? Is there a daily log book that tells me what my child did during the day? Is there a newsletter that tells me what is going on at the program?

How does the program offer ideas about how families can help children learn at home? Children are learning all the time, especially when they are home. But families often need guidance on how they can take advantage of these opportunities. Programs that value family involvement should provide ideas on how families support their children's learning at home. Is there a lending library where my children can get books to take home? Does the lending library have books on parenting? Does the program provide parenting tips on developing my child's language, art, and math skills?

How does the program encourage families to help at the center? Family members have many skills that programs can use. Can I share family stories with my child's class? Can I schedule a time to read stories with the children? Can I help plan field trips? Can I go on field trips with the class? Can I schedule a field trip to visit my place of work? Can I volunteer to help at recess or lunch?

How does the program support the whole family? Family involvement includes ways that programs support families, both at the center and in the community. How does the program help me meet other families? Does the program offer coffee hours where I can meet other parents and make new friends? Is there a parent education center where I can get parenting tips and meet other families in the program? Some programs can even help parents find services in the community that they need.

How does the program value family members as advisors? Family members have good ideas, and programs need to hear them. Does the program have a parent advisory board? Can I help interview new staff members? Can I help decide what happens during my child's day? Can I tell program staff how I think the program could be better?

How does the program respect and use parent expertise about their child? If your child has a disability, does the program ask you to provide training and information to the staff?

How much you choose to be involved with your children's program is up to you. The questions listed above can guide you as you look for a program for your child. Programs that value family involvement need to understand that your family is busy. Even if you can't commit to regular participation, you should feel welcome whenever you are able to help. Remember, no matter how small your involvement, your children benefit when the whole family is involved in their early childhood program.

This issue of *Early Childhood Digest* was prepared by Priscilla Little of the Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP) and based on HFRP materials, including *Raising Our Futures, New Skills for New Schools, Early Childhood Reform in Seven Communities,* and *Family Centered Child Care.* For copies of these publications, please write to HFRP at 38 Concord Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138, call at 617/496-4304, or visit the website, http://hugse1.harvard.edu/~hfrp.
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For Parents:

Noticing and Nurturing Your Child's Special Talents

All children have special talents that need to be noticed and nurtured to help them do well in school and lead fulfilling lives. Here are a few tips to help parents develop their children's special talents by working with them at home and by encouraging schools to offer programs that challenge children intellectually while responding to their emotional and developmental needs.

What Families Can Do at Home

Families don't need lots of education or money--just a little time—to help their children learn, think, and communicate:

- Set high expectations for your children. To help them develop a sense of pride in their identity, be proud of their achievements, whether they are in attending school, completing a homework project, or earning a good grade. Talk about why it is important to try hard in school.
- Talk to and play with your children. Read to them, play games, and do puzzles. Talk to your children about current events, your job, what's happening in the neighborhood. Encourage them to ask questions that you can answer or find answers to together
- Start early! It's never too early to start talking and singing to your child, looking at picture books, and taking them out to see the world around them.

- Pay attention to what your children like to do. Whether it is collecting rocks, reading, exploring how things work, or drawing, help them develop their natural skills and find out what enrichment resources in the community are available to them.
- Take your children to places where they can learn—zoos, museums, the public library and bookstores; community centers and community-sponsored programs. Many libraries have free games you can check out.
- Find out about early talent identification programs, so your children will be able to enjoy school and preschool when they start. Many communities also offer after-school enrichment opportunities.

- Take a parenting course offered in your community or at school that teaches how to develop children's talents.
- Find a mentor in your community who can help your children develop their talents and serve as a role model for academic achievement.
- In your home, if possible, try to have reading resources available for children, including bookshelves and "book baskets," that encourage them to read where they are. Set up a quiet place for them to study or find an after-school program that allows them to study with few distractions.

How Families Can Work with Schools

Families rightfully belong in their children's school and are partners in the education of children. They also know their children best and may have to help school people understand how their children's talents can best be developed. Here are some ideas for making sure the school is on board with *your* child's talents and for advocating for the development of *all* children's many talents:

- Ask the school to provide training to families and staff in recognizing signs of talent and intelligence in children. Some schools have a form so parents and guardians can check off ways in which they think children show particular talent.
- Find out what enrichment programs your school offers for all children and how those opportunities are communicated to families. Volunteer to help write an article or disseminate the information.

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- Be sure your children are given the support they need to be involved in programs that develop their talents. Ask for tutoring or enrichment if your child is experiencing difficulties.
- Ask for—or help create—a support system for parents, including workshops, dissemination of information, enrichment materials to use at home, and ways to obtain them at minimal cost.
- Lobby the school for early and bias-free opportunities to develop *all* children's talents and intelligence.
- Ask how teachers make the classroom curriculum interesting and challenging for all students? How do teachers develop diverse learning styles among students?
- How does the school identify and assess student talent? Does the school use portfolios, teacher observation, student self-identification or other techniques to fairly and freely consider student talent?

Programs That Are Successful with Multicultural Students

The following curriculum and teaching strategies are especially effective for children with many different learning styles, educational backgrounds, and academic and social skills. Parents can work with schools to make sure their children's education includes:

- An orientation toward achievement, success, and high expectations.
- One-on-one instruction and small learning groups of students.
- Mentoring by adults or older students with special talent.
- Special attention to the development of communication skills, particularly for bilingual students and those who speak non-standard English.
- A multicultural focus and instruction based on the children's experience.

This article is adapted from two pieces written by Wendy Schwartz, managing editor for the ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, NY 10027, (800) 601-4868 How to Recognize and Develop Your Child's Special Talents, and Strategies for Identifying Talent Among Diverse Students. Web site is http://eric-web.tc.columbia.edu/digests/.

Identifying Talents in Students

Traditionally, a student's intelligence was considered in very narrow terms, defined only by those abilities measured by an IQ test. Now, educators are more likely to use the term, "talent," instead of "intelligence," and to describe it as an indication of future achievement and a potential to be nurtured and developed, not a demonstrated, immutable ability.

Great diversity exists in the ways students express talent, and different cultures express themselves differently. Here is one list* of indicators of talent to help educators recognize that talent:

- the ability to manipulate a symbol system
- the ability to think logically
- the ability to use stored knowledge to solve problems
- the ability to reason by analogy
- the ability to extrapolate knowledge to different circumstances
- creativity and artistic ability
- resiliency: the ability to cope with school while living in poverty with dysfunctional families
- the ability to take on adult roles at home, such as managing the household and supervising siblings, even at the expense of school attendance and achievement
- a strong sense of self, pride, and worth
- leadership ability and an independent mind
- understanding of one's cultural heritage

Families and educators can work together to develop programs that reflect student cultures and learning styles, empower and encourage all students, and provide them with enriching educational materials, experiences, and role models and mentors.

*Compiled from the following authors: Clasen, D.R. (1993, September) in J. Drum (Ed.), Communicator, Canoga Park: California Association for the Gifted; Coleman, M.R., & Gallagher, J.S. (1995, May) Roeper Review; and Griffin, J.B. (1992, Summer) Gifted Child Quarterly.

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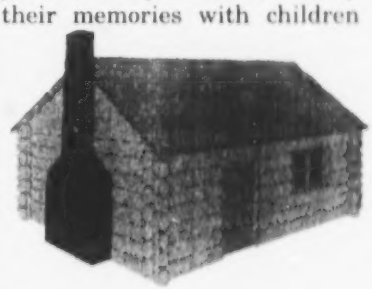
A Sesquicentennial Home-School Project:

Celebrate Wisconsin Families through History

It's not too late to strengthen your school-family-community bonds and help celebrate Wisconsin's 150th birthday. The following ideas are taken from, "*Celebrating Everyday Life in Wisconsin*," a State Historical Society resource and planning guide for creating classroom exhibits to commemorate Wisconsin's sesquicentennial.

Memorable history brings to life the everyday people, places, and events of the past. Grandparents or older family members can create memorable history—history children can connect their own lives to—by taking the time to share their experiences with students. Following, are a few suggestions for oral history themes and questions students can ask relatives or older community members. The questions can be the first step toward creating a classroom exhibit or can comprise a written school project in themselves. At any rate, many adults are very pleased to share their memories with children through oral interviews, and many children will come to think of "history" as something that happens in their own community to *them*!



Oral History Interviews

1. Prepare students ahead of time for oral interviews by discussing the interview process and what they are trying to learn from older family or community members.
2. Begin by asking the interviewee's name, date of birth, and place of birth.
3. Stress that the students should not focus on writing down every word of the responses, but perhaps a phrase or key word to jog their memory later. Listening skills are most important in gathering historical evidence.
4. After the interview, encourage students to take some time in a quiet place to record information from the interviews. Collect and save these papers. Did the interviewee make any suggestions about what might be in the exhibit?

Gathering Historic Materials

The following ideas for primary sources of historic materials can be found in local historical societies, public libraries, and area research collections.

- **Diaries and letters** give students the sense of what happened to real people in the past. They can be very interesting for daily observations of weather, work, and holidays.
- **Newspaper headlines, articles, and advertisements** about a specific event can be very useful for the exhibit. Because newspaper research can be very tiring and time-consuming, limit it to known dates or specific seasons.
- **Maps** of a community will vary by type, number, and accessibility to an elementary student. Try to use a map for a specific purpose. Consider plat maps, county atlases, road maps, railroad maps, aviation maps that provide a bird's eye view, city or village maps, and maps of postal routes.
- **City directories** have been published by many Wisconsin communities since the early nineteenth century listing businesses, residences, and local advertising. For some exhibit topics, students may find the advertising on city directories especially interesting.

Allow time in the process for students to gather objects and photographs from home or from the community that showcase a place or event in the exhibit.

Following are some topics, ideas for historic materials, and possible interview questions students might ask relatives or community members to complement an exhibit.

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Exhibit Topics

When They Were Ten

Being 10 years old meant different things at different times in history. In 1945, a 10-year-old would have lived in a country at war for almost half of her life. In 1923, a 10-year-old would have escaped the influenza epidemic of five years earlier. What was life like for 10-year-olds then? Were 10-year-olds in the period you choose to study all that different from today's fourth graders?

Sample Interview Questions

1. How old were you in ____? Where did you live at the time? What grade of school were you in?
2. How many children were in your family? What number were you (oldest, middle, youngest)?
3. What are some of your most vivid memories of that time? They could be about school, your family, playing, etc.
4. What was school like? What was your favorite subject? Who was your teacher?
5. What kind of chores did you do? Did you do any work for pay?
6. What did you do in the summertime? What did you do on summer afternoons or after supper? Did you play outside, listen to the radio, listen to people tell stories?
7. Did anyone in your family get sick during those years? What happened? Who took care of them? Did anyone else in your town get sick with the same thing? What childhood diseases did you have by age 10?

Ask students to look for toys, clothing, and tools used for chores at the time you are studying. Collect photographs, newspaper articles, and headlines about events of the decade. Ask a family member or local historian to speak to your class about local events of that decade.

Parties, Picnics, and Parades

The ways in which Wisconsin people have celebrated seasonal holidays reveal a great deal about life in the state. Memorial Days following the Civil War and World Wars must have been solemn occasions. Labor Day was a time for workers in many communities to share picnic food and promises of unity. Local ethnic celebrations such as Cinco de Mayo, Syttende Mai, or Juneteenth, were special times to renew family pride and traditions. For an exhibit, choose several holidays and present the changing ways they have been celebrated over the years.

Sample Interview Questions

1. How did your community celebrate Memorial Day? Did anyone call it Decoration Day? Who were you remembering on this day? Did your family do something special?
2. How did your family celebrate Thanksgiving? What foods were served? Did you stay at home or go somewhere? What did your family give thanks for?
3. How do Fourth of July celebrations today differ from those when you were a child? Did your community celebrate it with picnics, ballgames, and parades?
4. What other holidays did your family or community celebrate? What were your favorite holidays? How did you prepare for them?

Look for photographs of holiday celebrations in local historical societies, tribal museums, family albums, and school yearbooks. Posters, programs, and other holiday memorabilia may be kept by local unions and veterans' societies. Newspapers and diaries will contain accounts of holiday activities.

Feeding the Family

From the wild rice, maple sugar, and cranberries that Indian families harvested to the farms that later European settlers cultivated, the life of Wisconsin families revolved around what and how they ate. How families prepared food has changed, but some items, such as venison and cranberries, have remained a staple in the diet of Wisconsin families. This exhibit could compare foods people ate in different time

periods and the roles family members played in providing and preparing foods.

1. When you were young, who prepared the meals for your family? Did everyone in the family eat together at any meals?
2. Describe a typical breakfast. Describe a typical lunch that you would have had at school.
3. What kind of heat did your family have to cook food (open fire, woodburning stove, hot plate)?
4. Did your family grow any of its own fruits or vegetables for the meals? How were they preserved? Did you help?
5. Did your family raise any of its own animals for meat or milk? What kind of animals? Did you ever help slaughter an animal? What was that like?
6. Did anyone in your family ever hunt or fish for food? What kind of animals did they hunt or fish for? Did you go along? What was that like?

Ask students to collect photographs of people growing or preparing foods, and illustrations of tools and equipment used to hunt, fish, and preserve food. Montgomery Wards and Sears Roebuck catalogs, women's magazines, family albums, historical societies, and tribal museums are good sources. Newspapers after 1900 will contain grocery advertisements.

Other topics that students might explore include:

- What brought people here to work?
- Building a house/Making a home.
- When the weather went wacky.

"Celebrating Everyday Life in Wisconsin," a guide for fourth-grade teachers, is published as one part of a larger kit by The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 816 State St., Madison, WI 53706 (608-264-6400). Every school and public library in Wisconsin received a complete kit during the 1997-98 school year.

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Parenting Survival Kit

Using these simple items, collected in fun,
Should help you with the most difficult job
In the universe, that of being a parent.

Candy Kiss
To remind you of the importance of
a hug and a kiss.

Button
To remind you that at times, you need to
"button your lip" and listen.

Toothpick
To help you "pick out" the
positive qualities in your children.

Safety Pin
To help you hold together in
stressful situations.

Band Aid
To help heal all of your children's hurts
(feelings included.)

Eraser
To remind you to erase
all mistakes and start over again.

Flower
To remind you to take time to relax,
reflect on yesterday.
Anticipate tomorrow and live today!

Rope
To remind you that if you get to the end of your rope, just tie a knot and hang on!
This, too, will pass!

Happy Parenting!

Passed on by Regina Hull Jackson at the 1998 DPI Family School Community Partnership Conference

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The Museum Visit: Making the Most of It

There is no magic formula for visiting museums. A spur-of-the-moment trip can be just as rewarding as a planned visit. But if you have the time, some things that you can do before, during, and after the visit may help to enrich the experience. Here are a few tips to help make your visit to any museum an enjoyable learning experience.

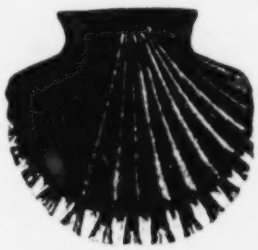
Before the Visit

Children may be more excited about the visit if they are involved in the planning. Ways to do this include:

Talking about what they will see in the museum, especially if it's the first visit. This conversation may include some basic information about museums and also how objects get there and why people collect objects in the first place.

Finding out what excites them. If your youngsters are interested in meteors or mummies and your local museum has exhibits on these subjects, you're ready to go! If not, just choose a place that sounds interesting, such as a museum in a nearby city. Or, look for a museum on-line.

Relating what's being learned in school to a museum visit. Children can use the visit to do research or to find out more about a subject they're currently studying. Your local museum may have exhibits that will help bring the subject to life.



Reviewing personal safety and behavior rules. Make a safety plan with your children in case you get separated, including the role of museum guards and other staff. Talk with your children about how to behave in the museum by explaining that museums have rules of acceptable and unacceptable behavior. For example, art and history museums generally have a no-touching policy because the items displayed are rare and can't be replaced, but children's museums are always hands-on.

Things You Can Do Before You Go

Call or write for admission fees, hours, travel directions, and best times for family visits. Ask what days of the week and what hours are the least crowded. Some museums have free admission, while others ask for a small donation. Some have certain days that are free or have discounts for families, senior citizens, students, and children.

Call or write for accommodations and services for visitors with special needs, including parking, entrances, and access to exhibit areas. Many museums recommend calling at least two weeks in advance for such services as sign language; oral, tactile, or cued-speech interpretation; captioning; or publications in Braille or large print.

Check newspapers, your local library, or bookstores for special exhibitions, events, or programs that may appeal to children. Libraries and bookstores often have books and free pamphlets that provide listings and descriptions of family activities that include regional museums.

If you have access to the Internet, visit the web site of the museum you plan to visit.

During the Visit

The Information Desk is a good "first stop" once you're at the museum. There you'll find floor plans with the location of exhibits, restaurants, restrooms, gift shops, elevators, wheelchair ramps, exits, as well as places to sit. Materials also are available in foreign languages. You might also ask about self-guided children's and family tour brochures, audio tours, gallery games and activity sheets, and family workshops and programs. Find out the times and locations for hands-on rooms, kids' performances, musical events, storytelling sessions, or museum tours. Next:

Be flexible and follow your child's lead. Don't be surprised if your planned visit to see the dinosaur bones is put on hold because the huge elephant has caught your children's attention. Let them enjoy the exhibit at their own pace. Be ready to discuss any questions they may have. If you

don't know the answers, jot down the questions in a notebook.

Try to relate facts about exhibits that you're seeing to what your children already know. For example, a knight's suit of armor serves the same purpose as a catcher's mask, a bicycle helmet, or shin guards—to protect the body.

Ask your children to tell you a story about an object in the exhibit that interests them. "Who do you think wore that suit of armor?" "How did they make it fit?" Encourage them to use their imaginations. If labels or wall text provide more information, include it in your discussion.

Play Museum and Gallery Games

Children of all ages love to play games. Museum games or treasure hunts focus a museum visit and help to break up the time as you go from exhibit to exhibit. They stimulate your child's curiosity, sharpen observation skills, and generally make the visit more enjoyable. If the museum does not provide games, make up your own:

Postcard Games. Buy some postcards at the museum gift shop. Then turn your children into detectives and ask them to find the pictured items. Not only will they enjoy the hunt, but they'll be thrilled to discover the real thing. Were the colors the same? the details? the textures? the size? Later at home, the cards can be arranged for a home exhibition.

I Spy. Have youngsters find an object in an exhibit and describe it to other family members so that each one can take a turn guessing what the object is. "I spy something red and brown with sharp edges," or "I spy something that inches its way along the ground."

Seek and Find. Ask your child to find paintings that have his or her favorite colors, shapes, or objects in them. This game is not only fun but teaches children to look very closely at each object. Games like this give children a sense of accomplishment when they successfully find or identify everything asked of them.

Where Is It? Ask your child to find something in the exhibit that is very old. . . soft. . . hard. . . strong. . . shiny. . . Or, something that feels rough. . . smooth. . . hot. . . slippery. . . bumpy. . . itchy. . . Or, something that smells yummy. . . burnt. . . sweet.

Tell Me Why or How? Begin the game by saying something like, "If I could ask one question, I'd ask: Tell me the steps in building an Indian teepee?" The answers are usually within the exhibit. This game is fun in any kind of museum.

Visit the Museum Gift Shop

Families are sure to find books, posters, toys, games, postcards, and other mementos that remind children of what they saw and expand their knowledge.

Child-Size Your Visit

Don't try to see everything in one visit. Young children, especially preschoolers and those in early grades, usually learn best in 10- to 15-minute sessions and can be overwhelmed by seeing too many things at one time. Thirty minutes to one hour may be the limit. Should your children say things like "I'm bored," "It's so hot in here," or "When are we going home?" you know that they've seen, enough and it's time to take a break or leave. Plan another visit to see the exhibits you missed.

Excerpted from "Museums & Learning: A Guide for Family Visits," published by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) and the Smithsonian's Office of Education, April 1998.

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"What will my child learn this year?" Tiffany Creek Elementary's Parent Brochures Provide Answers

Sometimes, the best ideas just naturally fall into place. When Del Boley met with her Action Team of teachers and parents after returning from the DPI Family-Community-School Partnership Conference in July 1997, she wasn't quite sure what to expect. The Tiffany Elementary School team from Boyceville had heard lots of good ideas at the conference about ways schools could reach out to help families become partners in children's learning, but wasn't sure where to begin strengthening their own school's partnerships.

"We went through the Six Types and agreed that so much of it comes down to communicating with families. We talked about how school staff can become so comfortable with what we're doing to help children learn that we forget to tell others, including parents," Boley said.

The Tiffany School principal and her fellow partnership team members—teachers, parents, and community members—ultimately decided to spend a $300 seed grant they received for attending the conference on devising grade-level brochures for parents describing:

- concepts students would learn in language arts, math, science, and social studies,
- what children would learn in physical education, music, and art,
- upcoming major school events,
- how student learning would be measured, and
- grade-level expectations for students, including nightly homework time and how parents would be involved with and contribute to children's learning.

A parent on the conference partnership team presented the proposal to develop the brochures to the school's shared decisionmaking team, who then took it to building staff council representatives. "We wanted buy-in from everyone, and we also knew it would be the staff that would do the work," Boley added.

With the staff council's support of the idea, the major challenge became time. The staff had only four months, January through April, during the spring semester to develop the brochures if they were to be ready for distribution to parents at the start of the 1998-99 school year. Grade-level teams of staff members took early release time to map out their brochure content. Each team focused on identifying six to ten bulleted items in areas that overlapped with subjects targeted in state standards and assessments: math, science, language arts, and social studies.

Boley said describing what students would learn in Grades 4, 5, and 6 proved more challenging for staff members than learning in Kindergarten through Grade-3. "Once you get beyond the 'meat-and-potatoes' of education in K-3, your focus becomes skill development, scope, and sequence." Communicating to parents the complex concepts that teachers weave into skill development was fairly difficult, she said.

Fifth grade teacher Cathie Plaehn volunteered to mesh together teachers' ideas and notes and student artwork into grade-level brochures, working on a computer, and running draft copies by teachers and parents for their comments. Plaehn was reimbursed $14 per hour and completed the demanding project for less than $400.

Boley said she has been encouraged by initial reactions to the brochures. Local realtors have requested the brochures, and families visiting the school are "pleased and surprised" at the clear, organized format in the brochures describing what children will learn in each grade.

Boley plans to solicit feedback from parents after the brochures' first widespread distribution this fall to improve next year's edition. Her goal is to align information contained in student report cards with the content of the brochures. Along with family handbooks, student portfolios, and student-led parent-teacher conferences, she said she hopes discussions between parents and teachers about student progress this fall will be productive, jump-started by the new brochures.

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Tiffany Creek Elementary

2nd Grade Standards

In Language Arts your child will:

- read for information and pleasure: understand what has been read
- share reading with others
- integrate reading, writing, and communication skills into daily lessons

- identify parts of a story and construct a complete story independently
- introduce the writing process and use of editing and proofreading
- spell assigned words correctly
- read and write high frequency words through second grade
- enhance skills of sequencing, synonyms, antonyms, alphabetical order, main idea, and details
- monitor rate and fluency of individual reading abilities
- continue to develop listening and communication skills
- apply phonics by using varied strategies in reading and spelling

In Math your child will:

- learn to say, read, and write numbers
- use games and exercises for arithmetic concepts, skills, and procedures
- collect and display data
- learn problem solving methods using number models

- explore 2 and 3 dimensional shapes
- measure length, area, capacity, weight, time, and temperature
- work with place value, including order, decimals, and fractions
- be introduced to functions, relations, attributes, patterns, and sequences

In Science your child will:

- explore various types of plants and their characteristics
- investigate materials, including pebbles, sand, and silt
- observe and predict objects of balance and motion
- recognize and identify the parts of the eye and ear

- recognize the importance of individual differences and friendships
- develop a deeper appreciation for the process of reduce, reuse, and recycle

In Social Studies your child will:

- understand the concepts and forms of a map
- describe and give examples of different characteristics of communities
- recognize and celebrate contributions from famous individuals

- understand the need for rules and laws
- express ideas how people interact in different environments

In Physical Education your child will:

- participate in the Physical Best fitness testing fall and spring
- combine shapes, levels, and pathways into simple sequences
- skip, hop, gallop, and slide using mature motor patterns
- demonstrate safety while participating in physical activity
- appreciate the benefits that accompany cooperation and sharing

In Art your child will learn to:

- recognize use of colored pencils, found objects, and collage in art works
- identify colors as "warm" and "cool"
- identify and describe art objects in the wider community (travels), some topics include Egypt and Japan

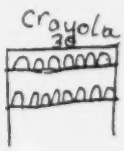
In Music your child will:

- sing a variety of songs for enjoyment
- read, play, and sing simple written music patterns on pitch
- recognize a variety of musical instruments
- play, sing, and move to music individually and as a group
- listen to music of various cultures and styles

2nd Grade Events

- Johnny Appleseed and Willow River State Park (Fall)
- Fitness walk on Red Cedar Trail (Spring)
- Running Start Reading Program (if grant money is available)
- Publish Young Author's Stories

Measuring Student Learning



- National Achievement Test (March)
- Grade Level Criterion Reference Test (May)
- Annual Student Goal Setting
- Individual Student Portfolios

Grade Level Expectations

- Parent communication through nightly go-home folder
- Homework will include such things as math Homelinks, rereads, story reading, family activities
- Recommended homework time: 15 minutes

Tiffany Creek Elementary
161 East Street
Boyceville, Wisconsin 54725
(715) 643-4331

Please feel free to contact your child's teacher if questions or concerns arise.